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THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE BIBLIOGRAPHY
OF ENGLISH PROSE FICTION BETWEEN
1660 AND 1800¹

No student of the development of the novel can doubt the usefulness of a check-list of English prose fiction for the years between the Restoration and the French Revolution. The successive masterpieces of fiction written during this period reveal, as no list of nineteenth century novels could, a wide divergency of type, purpose, and method. Such books as *Oroonoko*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Tom Jones*, *Rasselas*, *Tristram Shandy*, *The Adventures of a Guinea*, *The Castle of Otranto*, *Humphrey Clinker*, *Evelina*, *Vathek*, *Caleb Williams*, and *Castle Rackrent* clearly do not represent stages in a single line of development, but rather the culmination of various traditions or the combination in varying proportion of obscure tendencies. Behind these outstanding works of genius lies a relatively uncharted hinterland of experimental and contributory forms. When we recall that the fiction of this century and a half ranges from *The Grand Cyrus* to *Goody Two Shoes*, from Mrs. Manley's *New Atlantis* to Miss Edgeworth's *Parent's Assistant*, the need of some chart for the shifting cross-currents of literary fashion becomes apparent. But were *a priori* reasons lacking, the attempts made by several scholars during the last few years to compile a bibliography of fiction would afford a sufficient pragmatic sanction for our interest in the field.

In obedience to the command of your chairman I am about to rehearse the tale of existing bibliographies of fiction, both published and unpublished. But before I do so, it may be proper to remark that they have done this thing better in France. The first attempt by an English or American scholar to make a comprehensive list of fiction for any

¹ A report presented at the meeting of the English VIII Group at the meeting of the Association at Baltimore, Dec. 29, 1921: see the Proceedings, p. xxix.

part of the period under consideration dates from 1911, while the first special bibliography of French fiction is nearly two hundred years old. Nicolas Lenglet-DuFresnoy, the ancestor of all bibliographers of fiction, remarks in the Preface of his *De l'Usage des Romans* (1734):

The catalogue or bibliography of fiction, which forms the second volume of this work, is the result of much research. The labor of making it has been great, since no one had preceded me in the effort. And I doubt if anyone will wish to follow me. A thing of this kind once done is seldom repeated.

DuFresnoy was mistaken, however, in his gloomy view of the future of bibliographical endeavor. Before the century was out his work was followed by the *Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans* (1775-1803); and during the nineteenth century general bibliographers have rendered information about French fiction relatively accessible. Querard's *La France Littéraire*, for example, contains over 2,000 titles of eighteenth century fiction alone, while Gay's *Bibliographie des Ouvrages relatifs à l'Amour* adds a number of erotic works contributory to the main stream of fiction. I dwell upon these French bibliographies mainly to emphasize our shortcomings in this respect, but incidentally also to register a conviction that a collation of French and English titles for the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries would reveal a considerable amount of unacknowledged translation, adaptation, and imitation. DuFresnoy significantly remarks of English novelists: "At present they translate into their tongue everything good produced by us; for they wish to be sure of success. They are not like us; in literary matters they take no chances." This remark, published six years before the coming of *Pamela* started the literary current flowing the other way, suggests that the relation of French and English fiction before 1740 deserves a closer scrutiny than has yet been accorded it. A similar collation of English and German titles for the last quarter of the eighteenth century might also have its rewards. But it is time to return to the immediate object of this report.

During the last decade American and English scholars have been catching up with the French. I am omitting from consideration general bibliographies, such as the appendices to the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, and also bibliographies of particular authors, such as the list of Henry Fielding's writings compiled by Mr. F. H. Dickson for Dean W. L. Cross's *Life*. Of special bibliographies of fiction covering all or a part of our field, I am aware of four. Two of these have been published.

The first printed was the Chronological List of the Prose Fiction First Printed in England between 1600 and 1740, published as an appendix to Miss Charlotte E. Morgan's study of *The Novel of Manners* (1911). This list gives abbreviated titles in alphabetical order under each year, with the name of the author, the source of information, and miscellaneous notes. The dates of editions later than the first are sometimes given. Of 653 titles collected by Miss Morgan, 482 fall within the years 1660-1740. Her information, drawn from the catalogues of the British Museum, Bodleian, and Advocates libraries in England; of Columbia and Harvard in this country; the *Dictionary of National Biography*; and numerous bibliographical works, can hardly be regarded as complete. The number of small inaccuracies that appear in her work may perhaps be due to the difficulty encountered by DuFresnoy: no one had preceded her in the effort. She describes her list as "but a clearing of the ground in a field where little has been done and much remains to be accomplished." I do not belittle her work in saying that in most respects it has been superseded; such is the inevitable fate of the pioneer. She did yeoman service in verifying and describing many doubtful titles. Her list succeeded in its primary intention, that of illustrating the diversity of tendencies in fiction during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and it is still the only chronological list of English fiction in print.

The standard bibliography of fiction is now Mr. Arundell Esdaile's *List of English Tales and Prose Romances* (1912),

of which Part II contains books dated from 1643 to 1739. This is the work of an expert bibliographer on the staff of the British Museum, and within its limits is admirably conceived and thoroughly reliable. Mr. Esdaile gives author's name, complete title, publisher, date, format, source of information, and miscellaneous notes. He lists all editions after to the first up to his terminal date, 1739, and includes a wide variety of minor and tentative forms of fiction. The limitations of his work are: (1) that the alphabetical arrangement of items and the absence of a chronological list make it difficult to determine what novels were published in any given year; (2) that his sources of information are exclusively British, and consequently a number of details which could be collected from libraries in this country are missing; (3) that the terminal date, 1739, is not late enough to permit the inclusion of all that a student of eighteenth century fiction wishes to know about the experimental epoch of the novel. These limitations of scope make it desirable that Mr. Esdaile's list should be extended, supplemented from further sources of information, and equipped with a chronological index.

Two unpublished bibliographies—and there may be others unknown to me—have already carried forward the listing of prose fiction through the later years of the eighteenth century. One of them is the compilation of that indefatigable collector of literary information, Professor Chester N. Greenough of Harvard. He has collected between 3,000 and 4,000 titles covering the entire period—in fact his list extends to 1832—and has recorded editions besides the first. He has examined, though not with systematic thoroughness, the usual sources of bibliographical information. The feature of his collection which promises to be of greatest value is the large number of clippings from modern booksellers' catalogues that it contains. As every student of the novel knows, editions and even books not available in any of the great libraries are constantly turning up in dealers' lists. A collection of these items, such as Professor

Greenough's, may do much to supplement information gathered from other sources. Professor Greenough has courteously expressed his willingness to have his cards consulted by other workers in the bibliographical field.

A second bibliography which still remains in manuscript was begun some fifteen years ago by Professor John M. Clapp, then of Lake Forest College. His work covers the years 1701-1800. For that period he has collected more than 5,000 titles, noting first and later editions, and giving full bibliographical information. His work has been both extended and systematic. He has covered the entire British Museum Catalogue with its supplements to 1915; the lists of books published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Monthly Review* from the beginning of these magazines to the end of the century; Arber's *Term Catalogues* from 1701 to 1711; Lowndes' *Bibliographer's Manual*; and with more cursory examination a number of other general bibliographical works. Furthermore he has verified a large number of the titles collected up to the year 1752, copying the full title of each volume or tract from the original title-page and in doubtful cases examining the claims of the work to be considered fiction. There are, of course, some titles that he has not been able to run down, but they are in a minority. A description of Mr. Clapp's bibliography and of his results to 1912 was printed in the *Papers of the American Bibliographical Society*, Vol. 6, pp. 37-56. Upon his retirement from teaching a few years ago, Mr. Clapp bequeathed his cards to me. I have as yet done nothing to improve my inheritance. The cards repose in the Amherst College Library. They may be used without restriction as the basis of any new attempt to compile a list of fiction for publication.

In relation to this grand objective, may I briefly summarize what has already been accomplished? The two processes involved are: (1) the collection of titles, and (2) the verification of each title, and in some cases of the nature of the work, by an examination of the original.

The process of collecting titles has been carried very nearly to completion. Of the four possible sources of information,

(1) general bibliographical works have been used by all four scholars mentioned and probably need not be searched again. (2) All the principal British libraries have been searched by Mr. Esdaile for the period 1660-1739, and Mr. Clapp has covered the British Museum and Bodleian for the remainder of the century. Some stray items may still be collected from the Advocates Library, Edinburgh, and from American libraries, though the latter have already been partly searched. (3) Modern booksellers' catalogues have been a chief reliance of Professor Greenough's collection, and while new items may occasionally turn up from this source, the probability has been much diminished by his labors. (4) Advertisements in eighteenth century newspapers are still to be systematically examined, particularly for the years 1710-1750, the interval between the end of Arber's *Term Catalogues* and the beginning of fairly reliable lists of books published in the monthly magazines. This is the only source which is likely to yield many additional titles to the lists already compiled. In 1913 I had occasion to go through the files of three newspapers in the Burney Collection from 1720 to 1730, noting all titles of fiction with the date of the first "This day published" advertisement. In this way I collected a number of titles not mentioned by Esdaile, and incidentally I was enabled to give fairly exact dates of publication for many books. Of course, publishers' advertisements are not perfectly satisfactory evidence that the books, still less the edition, advertised ever actually appeared, and all titles collected in this way should be verified as carefully as possible. But I am confident that new and valuable information may still be obtained from this source.

The second process, that of verification, is more exhausting because the originals are scattered through many libraries and some have entirely disappeared. But a considerable amount of work of this sort has been done. Mr. Esdaile has verified his titles up to 1739, using the resources of the British Museum, Bodleian, University Library, Cambridge, Advocates, and South Kensington Museum. Mr. Clapp has carried the

process down to 1752, supplementing the resources of the British Museum by explorations in certain American libraries, notably the Newberry Library, Chicago, the University of Chicago, University of Illinois, and University of Indiana libraries, and, less thoroughly, Harvard and the Boston Public Library. The verification of the majority of the titles dated 1753 to 1800 has yet to be done, and a number of fugitive items not seen by either Clapp or Esdaile may still be discovered by a systematic search of the larger American libraries. This phase of the work may best be done by an association of scholars located in different parts of the country. It should be added that the bibliographer's task for the latter half of the eighteenth century is not nearly so formidable as for the earlier period; by 1750 fiction was beginning to receive literary recognition and to take fixed forms, titles were shorter, and the recording of current publications was much more systematic. A summer's work in the British Museum would probably suffice for the verification of the bulk of the untested titles.

I find the impression generally held by scholars that the making of a bibliography of fiction for this period is an enormous task. So it is, but I have tried to show that a considerable part of the work has already been reliably performed, and that what remains to be done is largely the gathering up of loose ends and the filling in of gaps. After all the amount of detail in such a work is not larger than that involved in a New York Telephone Directory, and man achieves the latter task twice every year.

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